

CONTROLLING NERVOUSNESS



Giving a speech or presentation in simple terms is just a heightened conversation. Some of the same principles apply whether you're speaking one-on-one or to one hundred. Things multiply or heighten the bigger the audience is...including nervousness. When conversing one-on-one, the energy is contained between two people. Vocal levels, hand gestures, facial expressions don't require much energy to keep others engaged. But when you speak to a group, you need to try and keep all engaged so you must multiply your energy.

So where does this extra energy come from? That's the great thing about nervousness! Why let all that energy go to waste when you can convert it to presentational energy.

Here are some ways to channel nervous energy:

- Acknowledge you're nervous and remind yourself its normal – you are not alone, the audience understands and wants you to succeed.
- Prepare! – know your stuff, your topic, be the expert, do your homework, and practice.
- Walk the room – prior to your presentation and the arrival of the audience, walk the room, get the feel for it, what does it look like from the audience perspective, make it your own.
- Meet & greet your audience – shake hands, build connections.
- Take deep breathes – slowly inhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds, slowly exhale for 5 seconds.
- Tense then relax the muscles in your face & arms
- Stretch your neck, arms and legs – also bend at the waist and let your hands and arms drop to the ground.
- Engage in positive self-talk – I'm good enough, I'm smart enough and by golly people like me.
- Mentally run through your presentation – visualize your points, your emphasis and gestures, and the audience's response.
- Smile – people will usually smile in return.

Fear will never go away as long as you continue to grow it. Living through a fearful experience is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from helplessness. You're not the only one to experience fear when you are in unfamiliar territory. You *CAN* speak effectively in front of a group. In the words of Edwin Newman, *"The only difference between the pros and the novices is that the pros have trained the butterflies to fly in formation."*

For more information on how to present, please attend our workshop Presentation Skills and see our Course Catalog for other offerings.



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